# REMARKS
UPON
M. *VOLTAIRE*'s
# ESSAY
ON THE
# EPICK POETRY
OF THE
# *European Nations.*

By *PAUL ROLLI.*

*Nor is it ſufficient that a* Man *who ſets up for a Judge in Criticiſm, ſhould have peruſed the Authors——unleſs he has alſo a clear and logical Head.* SPECT. N° 291.

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MVSEVM
BRITAN
NICVM

# REMARKS
ON
# Mr. *VOLTAIRE*'s
# ESSAY *upon the* EPICK POETRY, *&c.*

NOTHING is more apt to miſlead Men of Genius, than an Affectation of Singularity. When this Humour ſhews it ſelf in Writings that are embelliſhed by Wit and Learning, it is dangerous to leave them unanſwered; for the greater Number of Readers are often

are often ſo dazzled with thoſe ſhining Qualifications, as not to be able to examine narrowly the Reaſoning of ſuch Authors, which ſometimes is a work of difficulty: and by this means Truth is too often diſguis'd, and Authors and Nations miſrepreſented to the Publick.

M. *Voltaire*, a very ingenious *French* Gentleman, has lately publiſh'd an Eſſay upon the Epick Poetry of the European Nations, from *Homer* down to *Milton*. I think he wou'd have given a properer Title to his Book, had he intitled it either an Eſſay upon Epick Poetry, *tout court*, or an Eſſay of Criticiſm upon Epick Poems from *Homer* down to *Milton*. For I never have heard of any Epick Poem of *Aſiatick* or *American* growth: or that there was ſuch a thing as national Epick Poetry.

I have met in ſeveral Places of this new Treatiſe, with ſuch wrong Notions of the *Italian* national Taſte in Literature, and with ſo much falſe Wit in running down one of our beſt Epick Poems, as well as in condemning many of the ſublimeſt Places of the divine Engliſh Poem *Paradiſe Loſt*, that I thought my ſelf obliged both by the natural Duty of defending the general Learning and Taſte of my Country, and by the Love of Truth,

Truth, to vindicate thoſe two noble Poems (one of which I have undertaken to tranſlate) from the Aſperſions of this ingenious new Critick.

Before I come to the particular Examination of thoſe Parts of the Treatiſe, I find fault with, I moſt earneſtly deſire every Body who will give himſelf the Trouble of reading theſe Lines, to look over thoſe Spectators, which the celebrated Mr. *Addiſon* has writ upon *Milton's Paradiſe Loſt*, for he will then recollect thoſe right Notions which this Eſſay may perhaps have lulled aſleep: There he will ſee *Homer* in his true Light, and the different Impreſſions ſome Parts of the *Paradiſe Loſt* have made in the Minds of Mr. *Addiſon* and M. *Voltaire*.

I ſhall not ſay much in defence of *Homer*, ſo ill uſed by our Author: It is a very old Subject, but too much handled already. That divine Poet has been defended with ſuch Succeſs by the ableſt Pens in all Ages, that he cannot want my poor Aſſiſtance. I wiſh only *Madam Dacier* had ſtill lived, to ſee M. *V.* ſide with the *French Mock-Homer*, *La Motte*, both to wonder and laugh at him.

I warn'd my Reader at firſt, that he ſhou'd not be miſled by an artful Way of Writing: Which Wit-craft I will

demonſtrate is much made uſe of in this Eſſay. What a boundleſs Field appears in its beginning for the free and full Career of Epick Poetry ! But ſoon after, by little and little, that immenſe Proſpect ſhrinks into a very narrow Compaſs, into the Taſte of ſingle Nations, and this by the daily changing of Arts.

Page 38. *But it is not with the Inventions of Art, as with the Works of Nature. The ſame Fancy which hath invented Poetry, changes every Day all its Productions, becauſe it is liable itſelf to eternal Viciſſitudes. The Poetry and Muſick of the* Perſians *differ as much from ours, as their Language.*

This Notion may be a true one, in mechanical, but not in liberal Arts or Sciences, for they are fixed upon fundamental unvariable Principles of Nature and Senſe.

Fancy, which M. *V.* thinks, invented Poetry, is every day producing ſomething new ; but I do not conceive that to be the ſame thing with changing *all its Productions.* Cuſtoms and Faſhions, both in Peace and War, have in ſome meaſure changed ; wherefore they being partly the Objects of Poetry, have been conſequently deſcribed in a different manner, and many new Names have been given

given to things newly invented or discover'd. But what then? Poetry has not changed its Productions: All kinds of Poetry are ſtill the ſame. And as for Epick Poetry, the moſt antient Poems which have been tranſmitted to us, are the Two of *Homer*, whoſe Steps have been unqueſtionably follow'd by *Virgil*, *Arioſto*, *Milton* and *Taſſo*, without mentioning *Ariſtotle*; who from him has drawn his Rules of Epick Poetry. Arms, Battles, Sieges, Valour, Victory, Rout, *&c.* have been the ſame from *Achilles* down to *Rinaldo* and *Tancredi*. Gun-Powder is but a late Invention: and tho' it has alter'd ſo much the Art of War, Soldiers ſay that the greateſt Slaughter happens when they come hand to hand, the old way of fighting.

The greateſt Change has been in Religion; and this great Change has only alter'd the Object of our Worſhiping and the Rites. Temples, Altars, Prieſts, Adoration, Praying, *&c.* have changed no Names. All human Paſſions, all Objects of Nature, fit for beautiful Deſcriptions and Similies, have been the very ſame, not only from *Homer*, but from *Adam*, and will be ſo to the latter End of the World.

Pray then where is this Change in the Productions of Poetry? The Novelty of

Things and Cuſtoms, and the different Turns of Expreſſion, afford perpetual variety, but never make any Alteration in the Art, nor change its Productions.

See, for Example, in Epick Poetry: See the ſingle Combats from *Homer* to *Taſſo*: firſt between *Achilles* and *Hector*, with Spear and Shield; then between *Æneas* and *Turnus*, with a Javelin and a Stone Land-Mark; afterwards between *Sacripante* and *Ruggiero*; and between *Ruggiero* and *Rodomonte*; and at laſt between *Tancredi* and *Clorinda*; and between the ſame *Tancredi* and *Argante*, with Sword and Shield. Compare them all, and you will find no other difference in them, but in the Way of Fighting.

The ſame Courage, Intrepidity, and Amazement have been by all theſe Four great Poets, equally well deſcribed in different ways, which affords variety to the Readers, tho' the Thing deſcribed be the very ſame: two People Fighting, one conquer'd, and the other Victorious.

*Hector* begs that his Corps may not be thrown to Dogs; a Religious Abhorrence of thoſe Times: *Turnus* aſks neither Life, nor Pardon, but that his Corps be reſtored to his Parents; the ſame kind of Religious Prejudice. Life was offer'd to

*Rodo-*

*Rodomonte*, which he deſpiſed ; and dying at laſt,

*Alle ſquallide ripe d' Acheronte*
*Sciolta dal Corpo più freddo che ghiaccio,*
*Beſtemmiando fuggì l' Alma ſdegnoſa*
*Che fu sì altiera al Mondo e sì orgoglioſa.*

*Clorinda* both grants and asks Pardon, and deſires to be baptized by her Adverſary—A new Notion of a new Religion. Life was offer'd to *Argante* if he wou'd yield either to the Valour or to the Fortune of his Adverſary. He ſcorns to yield.

*Il petto audace*
*Non fè Natura di timor capace.*

He fights again, and dies as he liv'd.

*Moriva* Argante, *e tal moria, qual viſſe,*
*Minacciava morendo, e non languia:*
*Superbi formidabili feroci*
*Gli ultimi moti fur, l'ultime voci.*

We ſee in the two laſt Poems a Manner of fighting, very different from that deſcrib'd in *Homer* and *Virgil*; for the Arts of Tilting and Fencing were mightily improved. We alſo ſee very different Notions of Religion. Theſe two laſt

Heroes did not care what became of their Bodies; and *Clorinda* thinks of nothing but the Salvation of her Soul. But the Deaths of *Hector*, of *Turnus*, of *Rodomonte*, and of *Argante*, all happen at the End of the Poem and for the ſame Purpoſe: The Firſt for the Deſtruction of *Ilium*; the Second that *Æneas* may remain free Maſter of *Latium*: the Third to ſet *France* quite free from the *Saracins*; and the Fourth for the Delivery of *Jeruſalem*; which were the different reſpective Aims of the Four great Poets. And who can deny, that the laſt three have copied after *Homer*, not only in this Circumſtance, but alſo in as many other Parts of his two Poems as their own wou'd admit of? Things have ever been the ſame in all theſe Productions. Witches, Giants, Monſters, *&c.* have ſucceeded Goddeſſes, Nymphs, *Calypſus*, *Circes*, *Poliphemus*, &c. Men ſucceeded Men, Saints and Angels ſucceeded Gods; and in *Milton*, Angels ſucceeded Heroes. Fancy is ſo far from having changed all the Productions of Poetry, that if one does not look upon all theſe Productions with Poetical Eyes, they will appear to be nothing elſe but a Tautology; and yet when they are lookt upon with Poetical Eyes, how much Variety they afford to the Reader!

Painting,

Painting, Sculpture, and Architecture have always been the ſame from the Criſis of their Perfection down to this Time. Their Courſe has indeed been interrupted by the Ignorance and the Barbarity of Nations; in which either they did not paint at all, or very ill, and built worſe. But can any Body ſay, that in thoſe Times or Nations there was ſuch a thing as the Art of Painting or Building? thoſe Arts have never changed; for they are fixed upon unvariable Principles. I have ſeen fine Statues of the old *Grecians*: I have alſo ſeen thoſe of *Buonarota*, *De la Porta*, *Volterra*, *Algardi*, *Bernini*, *Gerardon*, and lately of my two Friends *Ruſconi* and *Le Gros*, almoſt equally as fine, with more or leſs Degree of Beauty; but all from the ſame Principles, tending and drawing very near to the utmoſt Perfection.

And now as to our Author's Flight into *Perſia*. If the Poetry and Muſick of the *Perſians* differ ſo much from ours, I dare ſay, they have neither. What can their Poetry treat of? What can it expreſs, but the human Paſſions, but the beautiful Productions of Nature? What invent, but Allegories, Romances, Fables, and Witchcrafts? What relate, but Human, Deviliſh, Angelical or God-like Deeds?

Muſt

Muſt a *Perſian* Epick Poem be unlike one of ours, becauſe it is *Perſian*? We are acquainted with their old and Modern Wars and Heroes; and they are juſt as like the *Europeans*, as Men are to Men; and why ſhould not then their Epick Poetry and Poets be as like ours? Rivers, Rivulets, Mountains, Plains, Woods, Clouds, the Sun, the Moon, *&c.* are they not the ſame in *Perſia* as any where elſe? Can any *Perſian* Poet ſay that *Zephirus* moves gently the Root of a Tree, and the Pebbles glide murmuring through the immoveable Rivulet? Any one may ſtrike upon an Inſtrument and make Noiſe; but if he does not play according to the Rules of Tones and Meaſures, he can make no Muſick.

The laſt Ambaſſador from *Morocco* gave a publick Conſort at Court on a Drawing Room Night, performed by the People of his ſtrange Retinue. Could any Body call their Noiſe and their Caterwauling, Muſick? The Novelty does not lie in the Things themſelves, but in the Turn we give them; not in the Production but in the Expreſſion. The different View one ſees things in, is the Spring of Novelty.

We have very ſublime Remains of the old *Eaſtern* Poetry in the Pſalms, in the Works of *Solomon*, and in the Prophets; and

and it is obvious that all the Novelty of that Sublimity conſiſts in their Metaphorical Phraſes, and in the Greatneſs of their Imagination, ariſing from the different Light they ſaw things in.

In ſhort, Poetry in all its Kinds is the more perfect, the more it imitates Nature in her beautiful performances; wherefore Poetry, like her only Model, Nature, does renew, but never changes its Productions. Even when Poetry invents marvellous things, as Transformations, winged Horſes, *&c.* it does nothing elſe but join different natural Productions, that in Nature are never together. The Mind cannot expreſs any Image but ſuch as it has firſt received through the Senſes.

I muſt beg Pardon of my Reader, for having kept him ſo long upon this Subject, and repeated many things he knew already; but it was neceſſary, in order to refute the *falſe Reaſoning* upon which M. VOLTAIRE has laid the foundation of his *Eſſay*, and by which he intends to prove at laſt, that a *French* Epick Poem muſt be a quite different one from all other Epick Poems.

Page 39. *If I am to give a Definition of a Suit of Cloaths, I ought not to deſcribe any particular one*; which proves only, that a Definition is not a Deſcription.

Page 42. *It is as eaſy to diſtinguiſh a* Spaniſh, *an* Italian, *or an* Engliſh *Author by their Stile, as to know by their Gate, their Speech, and their Features, in what Country they were born.*

I muſt own, that I admire the Eaſe with which our Author diſtinguiſhes Nations by the Style. I always thought that the Country of an Author was to be diſcovered by his Language, or by what he related of his Age, Country or himſelf. Suppoſe in any polite Language (in the *French*) a good Tranſlation of *Plutarch*'s Lives, and ſuppoſe alſo both the Original and Memory thereof quite loſt; let then the Book come out with the *French* Tranſlator's Name in the Title Page; who cou'd ever find out by the Style, that the Author of that Book was a *Grecian* and not a *French* Man? There is a Degree of Perfection and Taſte, which when Authors and Criticks are arriv'd at, make them all of one Nation, call'd the *Commonwealth of Letters*. *Hamelot*, *la Bruyere* the Archbiſhop of *Cambray*, &c. *Addiſon*, the Authors of the *Spectators*, and *Tatlers*, &c. *Bembo*, *Caſtiglione*, *Della Caſa*, &c. might, by their Styles, paſs for Countrymen; they think in the ſame Degree of Perfection, and their Styles keep equal Pace with their Thoughts.

Thoughts. The Hiſtories of *Thucidides* and *Machiavel* ſeem to me as if they were writ by the ſame Hand; and ſo do the Hiſtories of *Livy* and *Guicciardin*. When I read *Addiſon*'s Works, I imagine I read *Plato*: a clear, eaſy, and Gentleman-like Way of Thinking and Writing appears alike in both. The Difference between one Author and another does not proceed from their being of this or that Nation, but only from ſuch or ſuch a Way of thinking and expreſſing themſelves. A good Poet, Orator, Hiſtorian, *&c.* is like a good Mathematician in this. Let him be of any Nation, he has the ſame Notions, that all good Mathematicians have in all the other Parts of the World. But what does M. *Voltaire* mean by *National Style?* I never heard of any other good Style but of the Style which ariſes from the Matter one is writing upon. A *French* Elegy ſhou'd be writ in the ſame Style as an *Engliſh* or *Latin*; or elſe it is not an Elegy.

Page 42. *From their different Characters flows that Diſlike that every Nation ſhows for the Taſte of its Neighbour.*

The Reader now may begin to ſee in effect the Aim of our Author. I think I have proved the Reverſe of this Na-

National Diſlike. Envy and Intereſt, both in State and Trade make Nations diſagree, but never Learning. There is no other War in Learning but Search about Truth in Sciences, and Emulation about ſucceeding in Arts; which is no more between Nation and Nation, than between Man and Man. There is no National Taſte in Sciences and Arts. Hence it is, that if the Battle of the Angels in *Milton* wou'd not ſucceed in *France*, all the reſt of the World where it wou'd certainly ſucceed, wou'd laugh at the *French*. But I ſhou'd never ſay with Mr. *Voltaire*, that ſuch a Battle wou'd not ſucceed in ſo learned a Nation, and in a Nation which by Religion believes in that Fact which was the Foundation that *Milton* wrought upon. The relating of that Battle in its particular Circumſtances, is the Performance of thoſe *Embelliſhments by Imagination* which M. *Voltaire* at p. 40. did eſtabliſh as one of the two Grounds of an Epick Poem. When I was in *France* I was acquainted with ſome learned *Frenchmen* that underſtood *Engliſh*, and had read *Milton*'s *Paradiſe Loſt*, and they admired that Battle as a prodigious fine Poetical Deſcription. One of them whoſe Name I don't remember, who was a great

Friend

Friend to the noble and learned *Venetian* Abbate *Conti*, had undertaken to tranſlate the Poem; and when he read the two firſt Books tranſlated by me, he ſaid that the *Italian* Language was the fitteſt for it, and that the *French* cou'd never make ſo literal a Tranſlation, for ſome Reaſons he alledged, the Principal of which was the Want of Blank Verſe, which by the Bye was firſt invented by the *Italian* Poets. It will ſeem ſtrange to M. *Voltaire*, when he ſhall ſee the *Italian* Softneſs and Effeminacy ſoar to Sublimity, and grow when required, as ſtrong and as majeſtick as the Language, of *Milton*.

MILTON's *Paradiſe Loſt* may very well be tranſlated into *French*, if they would follow the Example of that incomparable *French* Woman *Madame Dacier*, who tranſlated *Homer* in poetical Proſe, which is the *French* Blank Verſe: A Truth well known to the Archbiſhop of *Cambray*, whoſe *Telemacus* I take to be the beſt *French* Epick Poem.

Page 42. *Hence it is that the long, but noble Speeches of* Cinna *and* Auguſtus *in* Corneille *could not be tolerated upon the* Engliſh *Stage.*

The longeſt Speech in that Tragedy is of 104 Verſes, Act I. Scene III. nay the longeſt

longeſt to be met with, I dare ſay, in all the *French* Tragedies: From which propoſition, he draws this general Conſequence, that the *French* Audience is uſed to long Speeches on the Stage and likes them: A new Logick that M. *V.* is uſed and mightily given to. But let us ſee if the *Engliſh* Audience would tolerate a long Speech: If this Nation, this free Nation, uſed to Speeches, even from the Scaffold and from the Gallows; uſed to hear very long Speeches in Parliament, and to read them when printed, and this from the Higheſt to the Loweſt; let us ſee if they diſlike long Speeches on the Stage. In the firſt Part of King *Henry* the IV. one of the moſt applauded Tragedies of *Shakeſpeare*, Act III. Scene II. there is a very moving Speech of the King, of 99 Verſes, interrupted but once by the Prince his Son, with a Verſe and a half; which is but five Verſes ſhorter than the longeſt of *Cinna*.

In the Life and Death of K. *Richard* II. Act V. Scene IV. the King in the Priſon ſpeaks 65 Verſes: Speeches of 40 and 50 Verſes are very common on the *Engliſh* Stage, both in Tragedies and Comedies. But after all, what ſort of a Logick is this? Firſt to lay down a particular Propoſition, then to advance another, falſe in fact,

fact, and from theſe to draw a general Conſequence!

Page. 43. *The following lines of* Taſſo *are admired in* Italy, *learnt by Heart, and in every Body's Mouth.*

*Colei Sophronia*,&c. the ſixteenth Stanza in the Second Canto. Our Author goes on with the very ſame Logick. There was never ſo falſe a Suppoſition as this. Even the *Venetian* Gondoliers who have almoſt all *Taſſo* and *Arioſto*, by heart, even they wou'd not mention that Stanza as a fine one of *Taſſo*. What they and all the reſt both of Common People and Gentry in *Italy* like the beſt in *Taſſo*, is the Seventh Canto, that very beautiful Part of the Epiſode of *Erminia*: they all admire it and ſing it in every Town. M. *V.* ſhou'd have drawn the Conſequence of the National *Italian* Taſte from that Canto, and not from that Stanza, whoſe over-nice Symetry will never be applauded either by the *French* or the *Engliſh*, any more than it was ever admired by the *Italians*, who with M. *V's* leave, require alſo *ſerious and majeſtick Simplicity* in Epick Poetry, as he may ſee in the general Taſte for that Canto.

It was very unfair of our Author to quote ſuch a Stanza of *Taſſo* in order to prove the general Taſte of the Nation.

I will quote as he did one or two Places of two of the beſt *French* Poets.

In the Cid of P. *Corneille*. Act. III. Scene III.

*Pleurez, Pleurez mes yeux, & fondez vous en eau*
*La moitié de ma vie a mis l'autre au tombeau,*
*Et m'oblige à vanger apreſ ce coup funeſte,*
*Celle que je ne' ai plus ſur celle qui me reſt.*

*N B.* that in the *Geruſalemme liberata* that Stanza is ſpoken by the Poet; but this Epigram is ſpoken in the Tragedy by the principal Woman in the utmoſt of her diſtreſs.

In the Works of *Boeleau*, one meets with theſe two following Epigrams.

XIII.

Sur l'Agelilas de M. *Corneille*
*I' ai vû l'Ageſilas,*
*Helas!*

XIV.

Sur l'Attila du même Auteur
*Apres l'Ageſilas*
*Helas!*
*Mais apres l' Attila*
*Hola.*

I cannot ſay of theſe lines what M. *V.* ſays of that Stanza of *Taſſo*. *There is nothing in theſe lines that offends againſt good Senſe:* Were there ever more *gingling Words*, more *over-nice Symetry*, more *curl'd Thoughtsrevolving on themſelves?* nay more childiſh and inſignificant ones than in the two laſt Epigrams? they *won't, methinks, be applauded* by an *Italian* or an Engliſh *Reader, who require a more ſerious and more majeſtick Simplicity* and more true, paſſionate, and natural Expreſſions in Tragedies; as alſo not ſuch flat Wit in Epigrams.

Far it be from me tho', to lay any blame upon thoſe two great *French* Authors, *non ego paucis offendar Maculis*; and far be it from me to eſtabliſh the *French* National Taſte upon theſe few or other ſuch lines of their Authors. I have read and underſtand the beſt *French* Books, I have been twice in *France*, I have been acquainted and have converſed with ſome of their learned Men. M. *V.* does perhaps underſtand, but I am ſure he has read but three or four *Italian* Authors; he never was in *Italy*; he never perhaps converſed with any *Italian* of true Learning; yet he, either by a ſuperiour Genius or *de gaieté de Coeur* ventures at this moſt bold and moſt inconſiderate Blow againſt no leſs

than a whole Nation; a Nation who in matter of Epick Poetry had *Arioſto* and *Taſſo*, almoſt two hundred Years before *France* had M. *Voltaire*.

Page. 43 *and* 44. *Among many Paſſages of* Milton, *which every* French *Reader wou'd ſtartle at, I beg to quote one, which has here more Partiſans than Criticks. It is in the firſt Canto.*

*At once as far as Angels ken he views*
*The diſmal Situtation, waſte and wild,*
*A Dungeon horrible, on all ſides round*
*As one great Furnace flam'd; yet from thoſe*
*No Light, but rather a Darkneſs viſible, (Flames*
*Serv'd only to diſcover Sights of Woe*, &c.

Antonio de Solis *in his excellent Hiſtory of* Mexico *hath ventur'd on the ſame thought when ſpeaking of the Place wherein* Montezuma *was won't to conſult his Deities. 'Twas a large, dark, ſubterraneous Vault*, ſays he, *where ſome diſmal Tapers afforded juſt Light enough to ſee Obſcurity.*

I am ſure there never was ſo great a Miſtake in any Criticiſm, as this. There is as much difference betwixt the *Darkneſs viſible* of *Milton*, and the *Light enough to ſee obſcurity* of *Deſolis*; as there is between Poetry and Hiſtory, or between *Deſolis* and *Milton*. One muſt needs have

have no Poetical Notions at all, not to find out the beauty of the Epithet *viſible* transfer'd from the Spectators Eyes to that *Darkneſs*. Viſible Darkneſs is what we call *Opaco*, and *utmoſt Darkneſs* is what we call *Bujo*. So you may, in *Italian*, ſay *oſcurità viſible* but not *bujo viſible*: becauſe there are degrees of *darkneſs*, of *oſcurità*, but none of *utmoſt darkneſs*, of *Bujo*. *From thoſe Flames* came out a *viſible Darkneſs* a Pale diſmal Twilight which *ſerv'd to diſcover Sights of Woe, Regions of Sorrow, doleful Shades* &c. *Milton*, I am ſure, meant this for *viſible Darkneſs*, and he underſtood the force of an *Engliſh* poetical Phraſe better than his *French* Critick. That he meant ſo, there is an infallible Proof in the ſame Canto, Verſe 180.

*Seeſt thou yon dreary Plain, forlorn, and wild*
*The Seat of Deſolation, void of Light,*
*Save what the glimmering of theſe livid Flames*
*Caſts pale and dreadful.*———

How is it poſſible now not to perceive the vaſt Diſproportion between this fine poetical Phraſe?

*A Darkneſs viſible*
*Serv'd only to diſcover Sights of Woe.*
And that bad Hiſtorical one
*Afforded Light enough to ſee the Obcurity?* In

In one *it is the viſible Darkneſs that diſcovers Sights*, and in the other it is *Light* that makes one *to ſee the Obcurity*. In the firſt there is fine poetical Senſe, in the ſecond there is no Senſe at all. *Sights of Woe* may be diſcoverd, but *Obſcurity* can never be *ſeen*. Venturing upon Nonſenſe is venturing indeed, and ſo M. *V.* did in comparing thus a great Poet who may venture, to an Hiſtorian who muſt never venture upon poetical Flights. I don't know but one cou'd mend that Paſſage of *Deſolis* as a Printer's Fault, reading *to ſee in the Obcurity* and make it as fit for an Hiſtorian. I defy tho' M. *V.* to correct any Printer's Faults in that *viſible Darkneſs*.

*Petrus Danetius* in his perfect Dictionary *Latin* and *French*, tranſlates *Opaca Locorum* of *Virgil*, *Les lieux obcurs*, by which one may ſee that *l'obſcurité* in the *French* Language does not ſignify *Privation of all Light*; for *Opaca Locorum* are certainly nothing elſe but dark Places wherein is Light enough to ſee Objects: and now M. *V.* may ſee that *Milton's viſible Darkneſs*, is the ſame thing with that *feeble glimmering Twilight* which his great Judgement gave to the *Rays of Homer's Light tranſmitted to* the Reader's *Eyes through ſo long a way* at Page 49.

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Page. 44. *I need no more Examples to demonſtrate that there is ſuch a thing as National Taſte.*

What will my Reader ſay? does M. *V.* need more Examples than theſe, or not? Demonſtration for him is very eaſie: Demonſtration that coſts ſo much Labour even in mechanical things! there is tho' I allow, ſuch a thing as National different Taſte in Dreſſing, in Toupees, in Cookery, but none in Senſe, none in Liberal Arts, none in Sciences. *Poetry a la mode de Paris* is yet to be ſeen.

Page. 46. *Our juſt Repect for the Ancients proves a meer Superſtition, if it betrays us into a raſh Contempt of our Neighbours and Countrymen.*

A very good Doctrine, and as old as good Senſe; and here the Reader may begin to ſee how our Author contradicts himſelf. Where is it now that *Diſlike that every Nation ſhows for the Taſte of its Neighbour?* As for the Reſpect which juſtly we pay to the Ancients, I differ intirely from him: for I think that the juſt Reſpect we have for them is the very Cauſe of our juſt Eſteem for our Neighbours and Countrymen, ſince they think then in the main, as we do, which is always the Foundation of mutual Eſteem. Surely M. *V.* has ſhewn himſelf mightily ſubject

to that *meer Superſtition*, and ſurely he was not *betray'd* into it by his *Reſpect for the Ancients*. Witneſs *Homer*.

Page. 47. As for his having learned *Engliſh* ſo ſoon, I only admire his Vanity, and his pretty Simile of the *Nurſe* who *was not diſpleaſed with the ſtammering Articulations of a Child*, particulary when ſhe help'd him. I have been now twelve Years in *England*, and have apply'd me ſelf to the underſtanding of ſo opulent a Language; wherefore I thought myſelf obliged to anſwer M. *V.* in the very Language he has writ his Eſſay; but I do own I have been corrected by my Learned Friends; and tho' corrected, I am ſenſible that my Reader will immediately find me out for a Foreigner. The *Romans* found in his Phraſes that *Livy* their great Hiſtorian was of *Padua*: I have heard of a *Greek* Philoſopher who after having been twenty Years in the City of *Athens*, was by a Market-Woman found out to be not an *Athenian*; which provok'd him to the laſt Degree. I wou'd only be ſorry indeed, if the learned *Britons* ſhou'd find fault with my Way of thinking.

Page. 49. *The Iudicious Reader is pleas'd no doubt with the noble Imagination of that great Author, but very few have command enough over their own prejudices, and can tranſ-*

*tranſport themſelves far enough into ſuch a remote Antiquity, as to become Contemporaries of* Homer *when they read him.*

What ſhou'd the Antiquaries ſay at this Notion of M. *V.* the Antiquaries whoſe greateſt and nobly learned Pleaſure is to become Contemporaries to the Things and Facts they are about. The Loſs of Hiſtories, by which we have ſo little Notion of the *Phœnicians* and no Notion at all of the People before them, 'tis a a continual Occaſion of Grief to the Learned. How cou'd we know ſo much of the Coſtums of the Ancients, had they not been tranſmitted to us by the Poets even more than by the Hiſtorians? I never am ſo well entertained by Reading, as when it makes me ſend back my Mind into remote Nations and Times. One of the moſt entertaining Parts of the *Odiſſey* is the Deſcription of the Court and Cuſtoms of the *Phœaces*, wherein one may ſee the Air of Truth ſo naturally diffus'd thro' the whole. But it would be to no purpoſe for me to make a Show of an uſeleſs Erudition, to oppoſe M. *V's.* too modern and too deciding Taſte, in a Nation where, down from the famous Lord *Arundel* to the preſent Earl of *Pembroke* and Duke of *Devonſhire*, the Knowledge and Taſte of Antiquities has flouriſh'd

flouriſh'd to the higheſt Degree. In ſhort I muſt only ſay that the greateſt Difficulty wou'd be to make *Homer Monſieur Homer*, as a *French* Tranſlator has endeavoured to make him appear by correcting him: But it is very eaſy, nay as eaſy as agreeable, by reading *Homer*, to become a *Grecian*, and not only Contemporary with him, but with the Things and Actions he ſpeaks of, tho' farther removed from our Days than he himſelf is.

Page. 50. *The Battles take up three parts of the Iliad*; and what did *Homer* undertake to write, pray, but the War and the Siege of *Troy*? He cou'd find fault alſo with the wandering of *Uliſſes* in ſo many Places, for it takes up alſo three parts of the *Odiſſey*.

Page. 50. *The Poem is certainly too long.* 'Tis a very likely Opinion that all the Actions and Battles in the *Iliad* were as many numbered Facts in the Memory of *Homer*'s Time, as all the Battles and Sieges of the laſt War are now. If according to this Notion, a Poet wou'd write an Epick Poem on the laſt War; he muſt relate but few of thoſe Actions: and ſo to pleaſe M. *V.* by the ſhortneſs of his Poem, muſt diſpleaſe thoſe Nations Provinces and Towns, whoſe People and brave Soldiers diſtinguiſhed themſelves in thoſe Actions. This was the Aim of

*Homer*;

*Homer*; to pleaſe all the Provinces *Greece* was divided in, whoſe People had been concern'd in that War; which perhaps made ſo many Cities claim his Birth. Had Mr. *V.* been capable, to have become Contemporary with *Homer*, he might have likewiſe thought that what ſeems too long to him, might not ſeem ſo to others: the ſhorteſt things may be too long, as *Martial* ſaid of a Diſtich. There never was ſo long a Poem as *Orlando furioſo* of *Arioſto*; but I never yet heard of any Body that read it, even in Tranſlations, who did not regret that it was no longer.

Our Author finds many Faults with the Heroes of the *Iliad*, and ſo he blames *Homer* for deſcribing Men as they then were, and tranſmitting to his Poſterity the true Characters of thoſe Heroes. What will make *Shakeſpear* ſhine for ever upon the *Britiſh* Stage is that ſtrength of Painting in the Characters of the *Engliſh* and *Roman* Great Men he ſets forth in his Hiſtorical Tragedies, ſo lively repreſented in their Vertues, Tempers and Faults, that they ſtill ſeem to live. Men may be artfully deſcrib'd either as they ſhou'd be, or as they are; but to deſcribe them as they are, is more difficult, uſeful and pleaſing; for the Spectator and the Reader find them more and more like themſelves.

If *Homer* contriv'd to make *no body care whoſe Share* Helena *will fall to, ſince ſhe ſeems herſelf indifferent between her two Husbands*, I think he was very artful in that; for he wou'd ſhew that not the *Woman*, but the Revenge of the *Offence* which a *Trojan* Prince had given to the *Greeks* with her Rape, was the great Cauſe of the War.

The Notion of thorough ſevere Vertue came into the World many Years after *Achilles* and *Homer*. Luxury, Pleaſures and private Paſſions, had not yet been quite rooted out from the Hearts of the Wiſe and Brave.

Rough Vertue began in *Sparta*, and paſs'd into the Commonwealth of *Rome*. Hence I think *Æneas* is the Heroe of the *Æneid*, but *Turnus* is the Heroe of *Virgil*; for *Turnus* was a Latin Soldier, ſtout, rough, undaunted, and not a weeping tender-hearted and pious one, as his *Aſiatick* Heroe.

If *Virgil* had need to be defended from what St. *Evremont* * ſaid about the Character of *Æneas*, it cou'd by this Reaſon, which ſurely was the Foundation that *Virgil* wrought *Æneas*'s Character upon. But no more about *Homer*. The Learned know that whatever M. *V.* advances againſt him, it has been already anſwerd.

As

* Alleg'd in Page 79.

As to what M. *V.* ſays in the following Pages about *Virgil*'s Imitation of *Homer*, I am ſure *Virgil* wou'd not thank him for that out-of-the-way Interpretation of his Mind. Pray why cou'd not the *Paſſion of* Dido, have had its firſt Hint from the Paſſion of *Circes*? *Why* Anchiſes *calling forth from the Womb of Time, the Fate of the* Roman *Empire*, cou'd not be owing to *Tyreſia*'s foretelling all what was to happen to *Ulyſſes*'s Return home. Both the Predictions happen'd in the ſame Place. *Virgil* had a mind to pleaſe the *Romans*, as *Homer* to pleaſe the People of *Ithaca*. *Virgil*'s Prophecy ended about the Greatneſs of the *Roman* Empire, and that of *Homer* about the Happineſs of the People of *Ithaca*; and ſo both ſoothed the Inclination of their reſpective People. How cou'd then our Author ſay about theſe only two things, *viz.* the *Paſſion of* Dido, and the Prophecy of *Anchiſes*, *all theſe Beauties are not certainly owing to* Homer?

Page 59. But he ſaid alſo that *Homer preſenting us with the ſhifting Scene of ſo many ſhining Characters, intereſts us for none*; when he ſhou'd have ſaid a great deal better, that he intereſts us for them all; or if not us, as our Author himſelf is not, he intereſted all the *Greeks* divided in ſo many

many different Governments, for whom he writ his Poems; he knowing well that every Province and every Government wou'd be mightily pleas'd to find in his Works an Account of their brave Countrymen. If M. *V.* will not make himſelf contemporary to old Authors, to be pleaſed with their Performances, he ſhou'd at leaſt grow ſuch, as not to blame them in what they deſerve to be prais'd for. At laſt, I dare ſay, and with more Approbation from the Learned, that *Virgil* had more Reſpect for *Homer*, a great deal more than what M. *V.* has for *Virgil*, and ought to have for that *Greek* Father of Poetry.

Page 67. *The* Italian *Tongue was at the end of the fifteenth Century brought to the Perfection, in which it continues now, and in which it will remain as long as* Taſſo *in Poetry, and* Machiavel *in Proſe, ſhall be the Standard of* the Stile. *Dante* died in the Year MCCCXXI. *Petrarch* died in the Year MCCCLXXIV. *Boccaccio* in the Year MCCCLXXV. All three, the firſt, the beſt and the never-interrupted Standards of the Language and the Stile. M. *V.* ſhews himſelf very well acquainted with the Epocha of the *Italian* Letters, as well as with the Knowledge of our beſt Authors; for he thinks really that till *Machiavel*

*chiavel* and *Taſſo* there were not in *Italy* any as good, not to ſay better, Standards both in Proſe and Verſe.

Who but a Man that either does not know, or will not own the Perfections of a great Epick Poem, cou'd ſay of *Triſſino*'s *Italia liberata, the Subject was noble, the Performance was mean?* I do deſire any Body that underſtands *Italian*, to read at leaſt the beginning of that fine Poem. The Language is pure, the Verſification ſimple and ſublime, and in blank Verſe. *Triſſino* was a noble and a free Imitator of *Homer*, as *Gravina* calls him in the Second Book of his *Ragione Poetica*; ſaying of him, that he *invented* what *Homer* himſelf wou'd have invented, if *Homer* had writ a Poem on the ſame Argument.

I refer my Reader to *Gravina's* fine Judgement upon this Author; and ſay only, that if ſometimes *Triſſino* falls ſhort of his intended natural Sublimity, 'tis becauſe he truſted too much to his Language, which being too full of ſimple Words, requires pretty often the Help of Metaphors to raiſe it into Sublimity; when on the contrary, the *Greek* Language being overflow'd with compoſit Words, it wants not the Help of Tropes and Metaphors, ſince its Words carry them

them along with themſelves. But how cou'd he who ſhews ſo much Diſlike to *Homer*, praiſe *Triſſino*?

What I cannot bear of our Author, is his inconſiderate Way of picking out few Lines, not worthy of Praiſe, to take occaſion from that to throw a Blame upon Authors. Mr. *Addiſon* anſwers him tho' in this particular, with a Story taken out of an *Italian* Author at the end of the 291 Spectator.

But what is become of *Arioſto* in this Eſſay? In Page 46 'tis ſaid to ſurvey all the Epick Writers in their reſpective Countries, from *Homer* down to *Milton*. *Arioſto* call'd by all *Italy*, *Omero Ferrareſe*, *divino Arioſto*, a Title given only to him and to *Dante*, the Italian *Terence* for his Comedies, the *Italian Horace* for his Satyrs, the *Italian Tibullus* for his Elegies. *Arioſto* was not worthy of M. *V.* his notice. He thinks, I ſuppoſe, that *Orlando Furioſo* is not an Epick Poem, but a Romance; he being perhaps one of thoſe of whom *Gravina* ſays in the aforeſaid Book, -- they think Romances of a different kind from Epick Poems, perſuaded from the Name which human Caprice gives to things, more than from the Knowledge of the Things in themſelves. — If *Epick* (ſays he) is nothing

elſe but *Narrative*, why ſhall not he be as much an Epick Poet who relates in one Volume many great Exploits, as he who relates but few of them, and ſuch as concern a principal one? If the Epick Poet is employ'd about poetical Fictions, as well as the Hiſtorian about true Events, why ſhou'd not *Arioſto*, for Example, be as much an Epick Poet as *Titus Livius* an Hiſtorian. provided you wou'd not exclude *Livius* from the number of the Hiſtorians, becauſe he relates all the Deeds of the *Romans*, and put in his ſtead *Saluſtius*, becauſe he relates only the War of *Jugurta* and the Conſpiracy of *Catilina*? So far *Gravina*.

Both *Arioſto* and *Triſſino* flouriſh'd before *Torquato Taſſo*: I ſay, *Torquato*, becauſe his Father *Bernardo* was alſo a great Poet, and writ a very fine Epick Poem, intitled *Amadigi*, either unknown, I think, to our Author, or neglected by him, as *Orlando Furioſo*. He cou'd have ſeen a Liſt of fine Epick *Italian* Poems in the *Eloquenza Italiana* of *Fontanini*; which if he thought not worth his notice, the curious Reader will at firſt Sight find that every one of them wou'd have deſerv'd it, as well at leaſt as a new *French* Epick Poem.

Page 77. Our Author comes now to *Taſſo*, and one may ſee very plain, how he deſigns to be his Rival, by drawing in the ſecond Paragraph, a Reſemblance between both in their Misfortunes, in very pathetick Touches.

Page 78. Then, in his uſual way, without conſidering the Merits of Authors and their different Ages, raiſes him above *Petrarch*, who had certainly no leſs Merit at leaſt in *Italian* Poetry, than *Taſſo*; which was known to *Taſſo* himſelf, who in his Lyrick Verſes was but an excellent Imitator of *Petrarch*.

He ridicules afterwards the publick receiving of a Laurel Crown in the Capitol of *Rome*, which he calls a Triumph; an Accident which as ridiculous as he pretends it is, he ſeems to be in no danger of. He praiſes the *Judges appointed to chuſe the* Epitaph of ſo great a Poet, by giving the Preference to this *Inſcription*.

*Torquati Taſſi Oſſa.*

Had he conſulted our beſt Authors, and ſuch like Judges; he wou'd have not then advanced his Satyrical Witticiſm, at *page* 71, when he praiſed *Triſſino* for his having not been *guilty of a ſingle Quibble in his Works, though he was an* Italian, and in

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page 79, where he ſays, That the Succeſſors of *Taſſo*, have *degenerated from him*, and that *Italy is now overgrown with pitiful Sonnets and Conceits*, which immediately he contradicts as uſual, by ſaying, that *ſtill the Taſte of the Nation form'd after his Poem, remains in its full Force.*

Page 79 Here he begins to exalt *Taſſo* above *Homer*, firſt about the Subject of his Poem, which he judges greater than that of the *Iliad*; and this by an incomparable new Logick. Then in regard to the Characters of their Heroes. (Page 80) who for moral Vertues, and other Notions, either of War or Love, ought in Conſequence to have been as different as the Ages, Actions, Religions and Cuſtoms were. But with all this M. *V.* muſt ſay, *The Jeruſalem liberata is in ſome Parts an Imitation of the Iliad.* (Page 79) Our Author took pains in comparing *Taſſo*'s Heroes with thoſe of *Homer*; but he was much miſtaken in that of *Hector*, by comparing *Argante* to him. The Character of *Hector* was judiciouſly given by *Taſſo* to *Clorinda*, which being concealed under a different Sex, it was not diſcover'd by M. *V.* He cou'd eaſily ſee how the Reader is throughout all her Character, concerned for her, tho' ſhe was a bitter Enemy to the Chriſti-

ans; how affecting is her laſt parting from her old Servant, and his recital of her Condition juſt before her going out to burn the wooden Towers, and to be kill'd by her own moſt Paſſionate Lover! which tragical Accident is one of the moſt moving things that ever was imaginated by an Epick Poet, and entirely new. Thus Great Men imitate other Great Men, by making the Imitation with ſome alter'd or additional Circumſtances, appear like an Original Thing. *Taſſo* in this, according to our Author's Opinion, ſhou'd be blamed as much as *Homer*; for he intereſts the Readers to the laſt degree, even to pity the Death of one of the ſtrongeſt and almoſt invincible Enemies to the Chriſtian Faith.

There is indeed an unuſual modeſty in our Author, when he ſays, (*Page* 81) *I will not decide, if* Homer *hath done right or wrong, in gaining upon our Affections towards* Hector, *and in moving our Pity for* Priam. I did not expect that he wou'd not decide upon any part of the *Iliad*, or that his Affections and Pity cou'd have been mov'd by any Performance of *Homer*. But if he will not, all the learned World will decide that *Homer hath done right*. The deſtruction of *Ilium* was the Scope of the *Iliad*. *Paris* his Offence was

was the guilty Occaſion of it; and he is always repreſented in an unfair Character. *Priam* and *Hector* undertook the Defence of a bad Cauſe; and tho' good and brave, periſh'd for it; which ſhows that the wiſeſt and the moſt valorous Defence of a wrong Cauſe, will at laſt prove fatal even to the Brave and the Good. But it never can force the Man who writes and relates the Fact, to place the Good and the Brave in an odious Light, who out of human Frailty either from a National or a Family Punctilio defended a Cauſe, which, tho' wrong in it ſelf, might have appear'd not ſuch in their Eyes. Tragical Incidents are the moſt difficult and the greateſt Ornaments of Epick Poems. I deſire to know by what Rules we ſhou'd be forbidden to invent and relate them very movingly as happening to the Enemies of our Friends?

Page 81. Here *Homer* is mightily prais'd, for *Taſſo hath learned from* Homer *the Art of marking the different Shades of the ſame Colour.*

Page 82. Nay here *Taſſo hath improv'd the Art which* Homer *taught him.* But ſoftly, you ſhall immediately ſee how the Man who writ ſo ſublimely and the Language that was capable of ſuch a Sub-

limity, you ſhall ſee how both are complimented at laſt by this great Critick. *It is wonderful*, ſays he, *how the natural Effeminacy of the* Italian *Language ſoars up to Sublimity and Grandeur, and aſſumes a new Character in his Hands.* Was ever this ſaid before M. *V.* of a Language that is out of diſpute, the eldeſt Daughter of the *Latin*, and ſo like her Mother, that whatever is writ in it without the *Latin* Turn and Reſemblance, is as far from Perfection, as from the *Latin* Stile and Genius.

How can ever any Language *ſoar to Sublimity and Grandeur*, if *Grandeur and Sublimity* are not in the Language? Jargon can never riſe to Sublimity, becauſe there is no Sublimity in it. By what M. *V.* ſays, it ſeems that before *Taſſo* there had not been in *Italy*, ſublime Writers, both in Verſe and Proſe. Without mentioning *Dante*, *Petrarch* and *Boccace*; it wou'd be enough to let him know, that *Taſſo* came after the Golden Age of the *Italian* Letters, which had ſo much flouriſh'd under the Protection of the for ever glorious Families of *Medicis* in *Florence* and *Rome*; of *Della Rovere* in *Urbin*; of *Eſte* in *Ferrara* and of *Farneſe* in *Parma*.

Mr. *V.* had a ſtrict Obligation to be acquainted with the beſt Authors who writ in a Language, before he diſparaged that Language,

Language, thoſe Authors, nay the whole Nation. *If we except*, ſays he, *about an hundred Lines in which he flattens into pitiful Conceits; but I look on theſe Errors as a kind of Tribute, which his Genius condeſcended to pay to the* Italian *Taſte.*

Tragedies, Epick Poems, Lyrick Verſes, Comedies, Satyrs, Hiſtories, Orations, *&c.* had been writ before *Taſſo* and in that golden Age. I defy Mr. *V.* to find in thoſe Learned Works the *pitiful Conceits* he attributes to the Taſte of the *Italian* Nation; he did not know that *Torquato Taſſo*, and *Guarini* the Author of *Paſtorfido*, were both the two beſt Poets of the decaying good Age of Letters in *Italy*. That unfortunate Province ſuffer'd very much by the Inroad of other Nations. The Country was deſtroy'd: great part of it changed Maſters: Kingdoms and Dominions became Provinces. The Bombaſtick Taſte and falſe Wit of the Conquerours ſpread it ſelf too much indeed in our Authors. *Marini*, *Achillini*, *Maſcardi*, *Foreſti*, and many now nameleſs Creatures ſprung up then. *Marino* tho' who was the firſt defective *Italian* great Poet of the decaying Age; where did he flouriſh? in *France*, in *Paris*; he there finding both Reward and Praiſe to his

*Concetti*; how cou'd he be brought to Correction? He was however a great Genius, and may be call'd our *Ovid*. I deſire M. *V.* to read only in the firſt Canto of *Marino*'s Epick Poem, the Deſcription of the Royal Palace, and of the ſetting out of the Sun, and he will ſee that *Marino* exceeds *Ovid* in it.

It was not tho', a univerſal plague. Many great Genius, as well in Poetry as in Arts and Sciences, preſerv'd the old *Italian* honour; nay, ſome very good Epick Poems came out. *Graziani* writ two Epick Poems; *La Cleopatra* and *il Conquiſto di Granata*. *Bracciolini* ſtill a finer one *La Croce racquiſtata*. There have been two famous Lyrick Poets, *Teſti* of *Modena*, whoſe true Works are only thoſe printed in Quarto at *Modena*, in the Year 1644, and *Chiabrera* of *Genova*, who both may deſervedly be ſtiled the *Italian Horace*, *Pindar's* and *Anacreons*. *Pirro Schettini* a *Neapolitan* Gentleman was an incomparable gentile Poet; his Works have been lately publiſh'd again at *Naples*. *Taſſoni* of *Modena* writ the *Secchia Rapita* ſo famous an Heroi-comic Poem; *Caporali* of *Perugia* flouriſh'd alſo, and was a very fine burleſque Poet. *Aleſſandro Marchetti* was the laſt great Poet of the decay'd Age of Letters in *Italy*,

*Italy*, and ſo great a one, that none exceeded him; of which his moſt excellent Tranſlation of *Lucretius* may give a clear Demonſtration to the greateſt *Connoiſeurs* both of Poetry and the *Italian* Language. The only Edition of ſo fine a Work has been lately publiſh'd in *London*, and dedicated to that Immortal Man, Prince *Eugene* of *Savoy*.

Had M. *V.* read at leaſt the fine Works of theſe *Italian* Poets, he wou'd have been wiſer, than to rail ſo inconſiderately at the *Italian* Language and Taſte, even in the worſt Age of their *Belles Lettres*, which by the Moderns is call'd *Il Seicento*, becauſe that Age which was not ſo univerſally a good one, began with the ſeventeenth Century, called by them, *mille Seicento* &c. After having acquainted M. *V.* how the general good Taſte of Letters failed in *Italy* about the middle of the laſt Age, (which was almoſt intirely owing to the Neglect of Univerſities, and the ſhuting up of publick Schools and Colleges under the Direction of Monks, who ingroſſed to themſelves all the Education of the *Italian* Youth) I muſt now acquaint him with the Reſtoration of the former general good Taſte in that Country, which began towards the End of the ſame laſt Age, and ſo teach him to judge

judge of the learned Taſte of Nations. The former Splendor of Letters was then reviv'd by the two Brothers *Averani*, *Magliabecchi*, *Bellini*, *Magalotti*, *Filicaja*, and *Redi* at *Florence*; by *Gravina* a *Calabreſe*; *Menzini* a *Florentine*; *Zappi* of *Imola*, and *Guidi* of *Pavia* at *Rome*; by *Caropreſo* an Uncle to *Gravina*; *Ciccio d' Andrea*, the Abbot *del Miro*, and the Regent *Riccardi* at *Naples*; by the Marqueſs *Orſi* and *Manfredi* at *Bologna*; by *Muratori* at *Modena*; by *Maffei* of *Verona*; by father *Dollera* at *Genova*; by *Apoſtolo Zeno* at *Venice*,— and by *Lazzerini* at *Padua*. Their Works or Names are known to every Lover of the *Italian* Letters; tho' not to M. *V.* who ſets up for a new deciding Judge of them. I defy him now to find thoſe *Conceits* he ſpoke of, in the Works either of any of the above named Gentlemen, or in the Works of thoſe which of late have been celebrated in *Italy*.

Now *Taſſo* in the Hands of his Rival, falls from his *Sublimity* and from his *improving the Art of Homer*, into very great Faults; nay, the Reader will ſoon ſee the *Geruſalemme Liberata* a very poor Performance.

Page 82 and 83. *There are Faults in him which, methinks, are cenſur'd every where*; becauſe

becauſe when M. *V.* finds Faults and cenſures them, the Faults are found ſuch, and cenſur'd every where; but let us examine theſe Faults. *The Epiſode of* Olindo *and* Sophronia *in the Beginning of the Action ſeems defective in all reſpects.* This was certainly the firſt time, and I dare ſay will be the laſt; that ſo charming an Epiſode is or will be found Fault with. Our Author, who ſeems to have read *Taſſo* more than any other *Italian* Book, has even forgot a great deal of it. *Iſmeno* did not carry the Image of the Virgin *Mary* in the *Moſquee*, but he advis'd the King to carry it there.

*Canto* II. Stan. 6.

*Or queſta effigie di tua man rapita*
*Voglio che tu di propria man traſporte.*

which was actually perform'd by the King.

Stan. 7.

*Il Re ſen' corſe alla magion di Dio*
*E sforzò i ſacerdoti, e irriverente*
*Il caſto ſimolacro indi rapio*
*E portollo a quel tempio*, &c.

*Iſmeno* was not a true Mahometan.

Stan.

Stan. II.

*Anzi ſovente in uſo empio e profano*
*Confonde le due leggi a ſe malnote.*

What wonder then, that ſuch an ill Mahometan and a Conjurer ſhou'd violate the Laws of the Mahometan Religion? But on the ſuppoſition, that a poetical Epiſode had any thing to do with the *Alcoran*, as M. *V.* wou'd have this of *Olindo*; pray, why cou'd not Superſtition and Cruelty have perſuaded a Mahometan King to act againſt the Laws of his Religion? that Witchcraft then ſhou'd have been according to their Religion: an orthodox Witchcraft in the Opinion of our Author.

*Page* 84. Taſſo *adorn'd that uſeleſs Epiſode with all the Pomp of Poetry; nay, he is not ſparing of* Italian *Conceits in it.*

I want to know what M. *V.* means by an *uſeleſs Epiſode*; or what ſort of a thing an *uſeful Epiſode* is? nay, why he calls this Epiſode a *prepoſterous* one? Is not an *Epiſode* the Greek Παρεισόδιον? *Monſieur Hanet* tranſlates this word *Res adventia et extra argumentum aſſumpta.* An adventitious Thing and out of the Argument. Now M. V. will have it a principal Thing, and within the Argument; that

that is what he means, I ſuppoſe, by an uſeful Epiſode. In ſhort, according to his Way of thinking, an *Epiſode* muſt not be an *Epiſode*. Nay more; a Poet muſt not be a Poet, and when he writes an *Epiſode*, take care not to adorn it with *Pomp of Poetry*; he muſt not *excite much Pity* for the principal Perſons of the Epiſode, becauſe they become then *principal Characters in the Poem*; he muſt not dwell with much *Complacency* upon the Deſcription of any Perſon. What good luck had *Taſſo* to be guilty of all theſe Faults with *Virgil!* Had M. *V.* writ this epiſodical Art before they had writ their Epiſodes of *Niſus* and *Eurialus* and of *Olindo* and *Sophronia*, we ſhou'd have had thoſe Epiſodes not ſo imperfect.

The Reader of any Learning will find how nobly *Taſſo* in this Epiſode of his, did follow all the Steps of that in *Virgil*, which his own was capable of. The *Complacency* of *Taſſo* in the Deſcription of *Sophronia*, is rather ſhorter than that of *Virgil* in *Euryalus*.

Verſe CLXXIX. Book IX.

——— *Quo pulchrior alter*
*Non fuit Æneadum, trojana neque induit arma:*
*Ora puer prima Signans intonſa juventa.*

Verſe

Verſe 432.

——— *Et candida pectora rumpit,*
*Volvitur Euryalus Leto, pulchroſque per artus*
*It cruor, inque humeros cervix conlabſa recumbit*
*Purpureus veluti cum flos ſucciſus aratro*
*Langueſcit moriens; Laſſoque papavera collo*
*Demiſere caput, pluvia cum forte gravantur.*

Fie, fie, upon *Virgil*, according to the *Volterian* Epiſodical Rules: fie upon ſo much Complacency, both in deſcribing even the beautiful Limbs of that charming Youth, and in moving ſo much pity for his Death; nay, in giving the laſt maſterly ſtrokes of Pity, not by one only, but by two ſo moving Similies; which wou'd make two moſt touching Songs in an Opera. But what ſhall we ſay of ſo much *Pomp of Poetry* with which *Virgil* adorn'd this Epiſode? Nay, what of that ſo ſublime an Exclamation, which cou'd have to the utmoſt ſerv'd for the beſt Compliment to *Æneas* and *Acates*.

Verſe 446.

*Fortunati ambo! ſi quid mea Carmina poſſunt,*
*Nulla dies unquam memori vos eximet ævo.*

What ſhall we ſay of *Virgil*'s *Complacency* in exciting again new Pity for *Euryalus*

*Eyalus* his Death by the long Complaint of his Mother from the Verſe 481, to 497.

Now let us ſee the long Deſcription of *Sophronia*.

Cant. II. Stan. XIV.

*Vergine era fra lor di già matura*
*Verginità, d'alti penſieri e regj,*
*D'alta Beltà, ma ſua beltà non cura,*
*O tanto ſol ; quanto Oneſtà ſen' fregi.*

Theſe four Verſes are in Reality the Deſcription of *Sophronia* ; all the other Verſes ſhe is concern'd in, belong to the narrative of the Action. As for the *Italian Conceits* M. *V.* accuſes *Taſſo* of, in this Epiſode, I bar that Sixteenth Stanza which our Author pitch'd upon for a Pattern of the *Italian* Taſte in Poetry, and then I defy him to find out in the whole Epiſode any *Concetto*, nay any Sentence or Expreſſion but what is true, poetical, and beautiful.

All the World may be as much pleaſed as they will in the Epiſodes of *Arioſto*, our Author wou'd find them utterly *defective*, *uſeleſs* and *prepoſterous* ; particularly in their being ſo elegantly deſcribed, as he might perceive by that of *Giocondo* in the Original, which exceeds ſo much the Imitation of *Monſieur la Fontaine*. *Uſeleſs*, *defective* and *prepoſterous* are ſuch Epithets,

Epithets, that a grave Author and a good Epick Poet, as M. *V.* wou'd be thought, ſhou'd never have given to that very beautiful Epiſode of *Olindo* and *Sophronia*.

Page 84. *The Taſte of the* Engliſh *and of the* French, *tho' averſe to any Machinary, grounded upon Enchantment.* —As for the *Engliſh*, M. *V.* has never heard of *Spencer's Faerie Queen*, a Poem ſo much admired in *England*, and he has never ſeen or read the Tragedy of *Macbeth*, which to my Taſte is the beſt *Engliſh* Tragedy; nor the *Tempeſt* of *Shakeſpear*: And as for the *French*, he has quite forgot, that all that Machinery, he ſays, they are ſo averſe to, paſſed from *France* into *Italy*; for *Orlando innamorato* of *Bojardo*, and *Orlando furioſo* of *Arioſto*, drew their Argument and great part of the Fable from the old *French* romantick Hiſtories: Nay, if Romances are, as they are for ſure, full of Machinery grounded on Enchantments, there is no Nation in the World leſs averſe to Machinery, than the *French*; ſince they not only began to write them, but always did and ſtill continue to go on more and more in writing of them, and now with a much better Taſte and Learning than before; witneſs *Telemacus*, and *Ramſy's Cyrus* lately publiſh'd. Strike out what M. *V.* calls Machinery, from Epick

pick Poems, what wou'd they be but no Poetry, no Invention, and meer Gazettes in verſe. I ſee plainly that our Author is quite the Reverſe of thoſe grave Authors, who wou'd have almoſt the whole of an Epick Poem, be but Invention and Allegories : he wou'd not have any allegory at all, for it is almoſt all *Allegory* what he calls *Machinery*.

Page 85. *It is ſingular to ſee in* Taſſo *Lewdneſs, Maſs, Confeſſion, the Litanies of the Saints, and Pieces of Witchcraft heap'd together.* Here now is his poetical modern Hero, his Better than *Lucan*, in ſhort, his Rival — here he is redicul'd, and his great Performance heap'd up as Dirt upon a Dunghill. One cou'd ridicule every great Poem in ſuch a manner ; for in every great Poem are Vices and Vertues ; prophane and ſacred things. What is the *Henriade !* M. *V.* his own Poem, which was once intitled, *La Ligue*, and now has got a better Name in *England* ; what is it ? An invented poor Journey of his Hero from *France* to *Great Britain*, a ſober Dinner given to him by an old Country Gentleman, by way of an Epiſode and a *uſeleſs* one, becauſe that old Man, a Philoſopher out of neceſſity, ſince he in his Youth had

*Ses inutiles jours*
*Perdus dans les plaiſirs, plongés dans les Amours.*

has nothing elſe to do afterwards in the Poem. His Hero relates to Queen *Beſs*, the Troubles of *France*, and tranſlates in *French* Verſes part of M. *V.* his *Engliſh* Eſſay upon the Civil Wars of *France*. the Machinery begins to come: *La Diſcorde:* She flies firſt to the Pope and Cardinals, there ſhe joins with *La Politique*, and both of them ſtripe *La Religion*; then back again to *France*. Now comes on a Witchcraft, and by *Machinery grounded upon Enchantment*, his Hero

*Au milieu de ces feux, Henry brillant de gloire,*
*Aparoit à leurs yeux ſur un char de Victoire.*

And to make the Machinery compleat, there is, you ſee, a Chariot. Why, now the Hero muſt go to Hell, or elſe it wou'd not be a compleat Epick Poem. This Hell is in the Air in a

*Globe élevé dans le faite des Cieux.*

There are alſo the *Elyſian* Fields, and the *Temple des Deſtins*. Then *La Diſcorde* undertakes a longer Journey and goes

*Où*

*Où finit l'Europe & commence l'Aſie.*

Then ſhe makes a Viſit to her Brother

*Mon Frere luy dit elle:*

to Love; a new Relation of his never hear'd before. The Deſcription of the Palace of Love is better than that of the *Pandæmonium* of *Milton:*

*Un vieux Palais.*

*La Nature en poſa les primiers fondemens,*
*Et l'art ornant depuis la ſimple Architecture*
*Par ſes travaux hardis ſurpaſſa la Nature.*

If in theſe three Verſes there is any Allegory, I ſhou'd be glad to learn how in reality *Art in Love* ſurpaſſes Nature: if there is no Allegory, what has Nature to do with Architecture? What difference between the two Journies of *La Diſcorde!* One to the Pope, t'other to Love! Love comes to *France*, and there his Hero ſinks in *Lewdneſs*. There is the Inquiſition planted at *Paris*: now comes the Siege, and the Prieſts and the Monks preaching againſt the Heretick *Henry*. At laſt Truth deſcends *du haut des Cieux*, and

makes the Heroe abjure *ces dogmes ſeducteur's.* Then Saint *Louis* immediately deſcends alſo *du haut des Cieux*, leads him to the Remparts of *Paris*,

*Les ramparts ebranlez s'entrouvrent à la voix,*
*Il entre au nom de Dieu qui fait regner les Rois.*

and there is an End of the Poem.

It is ſingular to ſee in *Voltaire* Lewdneſs, Religion, Diſcord, Love, Pope, Prophets, Witchcraft, Inquiſition, Hell and Hell in the Air, Saints and Viſions heap'd together. There is no *Maſs* indeed; but Maſs alſo ſhould have been at the later End a courſe; for *Henry* the IVth, by the Means of the *Maſs* got his Kingdom much ſooner than by the Force of Arms, and there is a Report that he ſaid,

*Un Royaume vaut bien une Meſſe.*

Page 86. *What ſtrange fancy! to ſend* Ubaldo *and his Companion to an old holy Conjurer who carries them juſt into the Center of the Earth.* Did not I ſay, that Allegory is by M. *V.* call'd *Machinery?* Wiſdom and Knowledge is what he calls *an old holy Conjurer*; and good Fortune, or Providence *an old Woman.* He finds fault with the Know-

Knowledge, that *carries them into the Center of the Earth*; I ſuppoſe, becauſe he thinks that the Allegory wou'd have been finer, had it been related to *ſuperficial Knowledge*. But here is no occaſion at all to defend *Taſſo*: the incomparable Beauties of that part of *Armidas*'s Epiſode are as obvious to all the reſt of the Learned, as ſtrangely ill uſed by M. *V.* who writ thoſe three following Paragraphs in the Stile of *Scaron*, or *Lalli*, with the intention of writing *il Taſſo traveſtito*; by which way one may ridicule all the beſt poetical Works. I ſhall conclude this Paragraph, by ſaying with Mr. *Addiſon*, that ſuch falſe ridiculous Wit has only effect among the Generality of thoſe whoſe Hands it falls into: the Rabble of Mankind being very apt to think that every thing which is laughed at with any Mixture of Wit, is ridiculous in it ſelf. SPECT. No 291.

He decides notwithſtanding the *whole Pharſalia not to be compared to the Jeruſalem of* Taſſo.

Page 89. *The Virtuoſi in* Italy *have diſputed for a long while, and ſtill conteſt which of the two*, Arioſto *or* Taſſo *deſerves the Precedency.*

In this Diſpute there were ſo few on the ſide of *Taſſo*, that it was over at the very ſtarting of it. It is enough to let M. *V.* know that the Name of *Divino*

commonly given to *Arioſto*, was never given to *Taſſo*; from whence our Author may argue the National Taſte.

Page 89, 90. *But every where elſe the chiefeſt Exception that Men of Underſtanding take to* Taſſo, *is, that of having too much of* Arioſto *in him.*

If every where elſe Men of underſtanding wou'd judge of Books without reading them, our Author cou'd have with Impunity advanced ſuch an aſſertion. In *Italy* the *chiefeſt Exception* taken to *Taſſo*, wou'd be his having too little of *Arioſto* in him; and every Reader may ſee it in Reality.

Page 90. *In order to cover this Defect he printed a Preface, in which he pretends that all his Poem is but a Shadow and a Type.*

M. *V.* did not conſider the Difference between the Allegories in a Poem, and the Allegory of a Poem. The firſt have been invented for Ornament and the moſt pleaſing inſtructive Parts of a Poem, when Vices and Vertues and their Cauſes and Events come at proper Places in the Narration of Facts. The ſecond has been a modern ſtupid Invention, which more properly ſhou'd be call'd, the *Moral of the Poem*; for it is nothing elſe but a Moral Obſervation upon the Whole, in which the Commentators intend to

diſplay

diſplay their Philoſophy and Eloquence, as Politicians do, who by hiſtorical Facts prove their Maxims. *Taſſo* complied with the new Cuſtom, by writing that *Allegory*; but he never intended to perſuade his Readers, that upon that Foundation he had writ his Poem. M. *V.* ſhou'd have read *il Giudizio del Taſſo ſopra la ſua Geruſalemme*, which is the very firſt Proſe in the two Volumes in Quarto of his Poſthumous Works, and there he wou'd have found all the Hiſtorical Tracts of his Poem. I pity indeed our Author about this fine Simile, ſo witty and ſo well adapted to the Purpoſe:

Page 91. Taſſo *was like that Ambaſſador who having ſpent all the Time of his Embaſſy in Debauchery and Riot, wrote to his Maſter that he was whoring and drinking for the Service of his Majeſty.* Pray where is the Wit? where the Compariſon?

Page ditto. *For we no more allow an Author to comment upon himſelf, than a Prieſt to prophecy of himſelf.*

What Rule forbids the firſt? what Example contradicts the ſecond? I deſire M. *V.* would read that fine dithyrambick Poem of *Redi, Bacco in Toſcana*, commented by himſelf; may be he wou'd wiſh then he cou'd ſhew ſuch an other Maſter-Piece in *French*.

Page 91 and 92. *He is guilty of mingling often Pagan Ideas with Chriſtian Mythology*, &c.

This Poetical Licence has been granted by Cuſtom to all our great Epick Poets. *Dante*, *Arioſto*, *Taſſo* and *Milton* have made uſe of it, and no Fault has been found with it. But why does not M. *V.* blame himſelf for having taken the ſame Licence? I'll quote many Paſſages of his Poem, where he is guilty of this Fault. I find in the Henriade, *Mars* for *War*, *Hymen* for Matrimony. *Un Epeé trempeé aux infernales eaux-de Themis & de Mars ont vendu les honneurs - le Temple des Deſtins - Pomona - Flora - a Sanctuaire* in the Palace of Love -- *Dans ſon Temple*, of Love, *A l'autel de lor Dieu*, Love - *Pres du Temp ſacré*, of Love. *On porte au Sanctuaire*, of Love. *Toi dont la main fatale, fit tomber ſans effort Hercule au pieds d'Omphale. Veniſe dont Neptune admire le deſtin. Les chiffres de Diane y ſont ancor tracez*; all Pagan Ideas! What does he think beſides of his *Diſcord*, Siſter, as he ſtiles her, to Love, whom he calls a *God*, *Dieu?* is ſhe not then a *Goddeſs?* All their Journies and Exploits in company with *La Politique* Hypocriſy *&c.* to the Vatican, to the old Palace of Love, and to *France*; Is not all this what he calls *Mingling Pagan Ideas with*

*with Chriſtian Mythology?* ſee only the Cut of the Ninth Canto, which is the fineſt of all, and judge then if the *Pagan Ideas* are not in his Chriſtian Poem; In which *Love* a perfect *Idalian Pagan Cupid* that's deſcribed by him with all his Implements, Wings, Bow and Arrows, is a real Actor.

It is indeed the firſt time I have heard a Poet who out of Eagerneſs of diſparaging the greateſt Poets; wou'd deſtroy all Poetical Licences, and even the moſt allow'd, which are the greateſt Beauties of Poetry, and then to be guilty himſelf of what he blamed others for. I hope that both the Faults and the Perfections of *Taſſo* and *Milton* may be found in his *Henriade.*

The Reader ſhou'd take Notice how M. *V.* imbelliſhes his Eſſay with pretty Similes. I own I am delighted with them, and expect them as I do Songs in an Opera. How finely and at full length are they writ! The drunken Ambaſſadour in the laſt Page, the Virgin Mary and her Chapelet, and *Pharao* with his *Swiſs* Guards in this, are painted after the Stile of *Tenier*, and ſuit the Purpoſe juſt as the *Swiſs* Guards ſuit *Pharao:* they belong, beſides, very well to an Eſſay of ſo great a Subject as Epick Poetry, and to ſo grave an Author as M. *V.* I dont blame him as to his *Machinery*, becauſe I wou'd not think in this, like him; and becauſe, alſo

if

if there is in his Poem any great Epick Beauty, it is certainly in that very Machinery; without which, his Poem wou'd have been but a Gazette in *French* Verſes.

Page 103. Milton *ſaw at* Florence *a Comedy call'd* Adamo, *&c.* it was at *Milan*; they wou'd not have born with it at *Florence*. *Dryden* has writ ſuch a Comedy, which the *Italians* call an *Oratorio*. *Andreini* was a Stroller, *Un Iſtrione*, of the worſt Age of the *Italian* Letters; but with all, the Idea was a great one: ill manag'd, tho' greatly imagined. See only the Cuts of the Book, and you'll expect from their repreſentations a great deal better Performance than that you afterwards meet with. There may be many in the Profeſſion of *Andreini*; nay, good Comedians, who cou'd imagine a fine Draught of a Play, tho' not able to execute it: for their Imagination is prompted by Genius and the Practice of the Stage, which they are uſed to; but the right Performance of it cannot be prompted by the Knowledge and poetical Theory and Ability which they have not. *Shakeſpear*'s and *Molier*'s are very ſcarce in the World. Notwithſtanding what M. *V.* ſays, if a bad *Italian* Comedian cou'd have given but the leaſt Hint

of

of his Poem to *Milton*, I ſhou'd think it a very great Honour for that Country.

Page 108. I wonder that M. *V.* by his Critick diſcernment did not find the two laſt Verſes of *Dryden*'s Epigram upon *Milton*, to be ſuperfluous, they being nothing elſe but an uſeleſs Explanation of the half of the Fourth. *In both the Laſt.*

Page 110. *The* Italian, *in Point of Tragedy, wou'd catch the Flame from the* Engliſh, *and all the reſt from the* French. *In Point of Comedy, they wou'd learn from Mr.* Congreve *and ſome other Authors, to prefer Wit and Humour to Buffoonery.* M. *V.* more and more diſcovers himſelf to be thoroughly acquainted with the *Italian* Authors. He takes, I ſuppoſe, *La troupe Italienne* for the *Italian* Theater. I muſt then let him know, that as for Tragedy, the Marquis *Scipioni Maffei*, beſides his own very fine one, *La Merope*, has publiſh'd three Volumes in Octavo, lately at *Verona* of our antient Tragedies, and theſe three Volumes are but thoſe that deſerve the Title of the *Italian* Theater. As for Comedies, which *Italy* abounds with, more and better then Tragedies, he ſhou'd have examin'd thoſe mention'd in *Fontanini's Eloquenza Italiana*; he ſhou'd have at leaſt read the two of *Machiavel*, and he wou'd have then ſeen that we never needed

needed to learn from any other Nation any perfection belonging to the Stage. *Italy* wants indeed a Publick Theater for both Tragedies and Comedies, with the Protection of Sovereigns, and a general encouragement, as in *France* and in *England*? Theſe two Circumſtances are ſuch a ſtrong Encitement to Men of Genius, that I wonder how new *Molier*'s, *Corneille*'s, and *Racine*'s, *Shakeſpear*'s *Addiſon*'s, *Congreve*'s and *Steele*'s are now wanting in theſe two great Nations. I muſt tho' do juſtice to M. *V.* by thinking him now almoſt as good a Tragedian as his Predeceſſours. Poor *Italians!* they love Learning, as they ought to love *God*, only becauſe it is in itſelf amiable, and not becauſe might is to them of any Profit; nay, it is well enough if Learning ſhelters them from Perſecution, or at leaſt from Diſlike, which is almoſt as bad as Perſecution: The Cauſe of which Misfortune I will not explain.

Page 110. *I will venture to ſay, that none of the* French *Criticks could like the Excurſions which* Milton *makes ſometimes beyond the ſtrict Limits of his Subject*; wherefore they wou'd be ſure of never having ſo great a Poet as *Milton*. Indeed if *Milton* wou'd have kept his Genius within the ſtrict Limits of his Subject, few Verſes ſhou'd have

have been enough for it; he choſe that Subject to place it like a Center to which he might draw as many Lines as his ſurpriſing Genius cou'd. The greateſt Excellencies of his Poem conſiſt, beyond compariſon, more in thoſe Lines than in the Center. No other Rules but the melancholy and dull Vapours of Criticks, ever excluded Digreſſions from thoſe Lines? They were never reckon'd Faults in the Hiſtorians; why then ſhou'd they in Epick Poets? Digreſſions may be vicious when they are intruded ſo as to have nothing to do with the Center. Mr. *Addiſon* favour'd the Opinion of thoſe Criticks in ſome Part, and I realy wonder at it; ſo great a Genius as he, ſhou'd have broke the brittle Fetters of vaporous Criticks, who, had they been Poets, wou'd either have been guilty of thoſe charming Beauties which they call Faults, or Poets as dull as their own Criticiſm. There happens in *Milton*'s Poem a Paſſage from Darkneſs to Light what a charming occaſion for a moving deſcription of his own Misfortune! and how he lines it to the Center! What more divine than that very beginning!

*Hail holy Light!*

See how he centers it from

*Thee I reviſit now with bolder Wing*, &c. to

*All Miſt from thence*
*Purge and diſperſe ; that I may ſee and tell*
*Of Things inviſible to mortal Sight.*

*Adam* and *Eve* are two principal Perſons of the Poem. The Inſtitution of Marriage by the Creator has its Foundation in that firſt Couple ; how can then Fault be found with a Panegyrick on Marriage ? This glorious Digreſſion not only ought not to be criticis'd, for its being out of the Subject, but it ſhou'd be infinitely admired as a juſt and ſevere Satyr againſt the too-much encreaſing Fault in Mankind, of ridiculing Matrimony : a Fault derived chiefly from the Power of thoſe Men who declared it a Sacrament for others, and a Sin for themſelves.

Of ſuch a Nature are ſeveral other paſſages in his Poem, and are by no means liable to any Exception ; nay, they are of ſuch a Conſequence, that if you ſtrike them out of the Poem, you deprive it of vaſt many eſſential Beauties. When Mr. *Addiſon* ſays, *Tho' I muſt confeſs there is ſo great a Beauty in theſe very Digreſſions, that I would not wiſh them*

*out*

*out of his Poem*, he gives to thoſe Digreſſions the beſt Sanction one could expect from a learned Man; for if he would not wiſh them out of the Poem, he then thought them fine Ornaments to it: Such an effect would quite deſtroy, if there is any, the Rule which forbids Digreſſions in an Epick Poem. I am ſure, tho' that the *French* Criticks ſhould never give the Name of *Excurſions* to ſuch fine Digreſſions, as M. *V.* aſſerts they would.

As for the frequent Glances at the Heathen Mythology that M. *V.* criticizes in *Milton*, there are three Views of Heathen Mythology; one is the Hiſtorical, the next is the Philoſophical, the Third is the Religious. As for the Third, it may be found Fault with in a Divine Poem, like that of *Milton*, but is not ſo with regard to the other two; and it is either in the Hiſtorical or in the Philoſophical Sight *Milton* made uſe of them, and by way of Similes; for he never mingled the Heathen Divinity with the Chriſtian Religion. As for *Milton*'s Puns and Jeſts, one may venture to ſay, that he obſerved a Propriety in placing them, for he made the Devils out of Scorn, pun and jeſt upon the Angels: If one conſiders it right, he will find that the moſt offen-

offenſive Way of treating one, is to make a Jeſt of him; for Irony and Deriſion are the ſtrongeſt Inſtances of Contempt. It is ſurprizing how eaſy and natural all thoſe Puns run in the *Italian* Tranſlation! and what fierce and inſolent Air thy give to the Speeches of *Satan* and *Belial*. This was certainly the Intention of *Milton*, as it appears by his ſaying

*So ſcoffing in ambigous Words*, &c.
*And to his Mates thus in Deriſion call'd*, &c.
*To whom thus* Belial *in like gameſome Mood*, &c.
*So they among themſelves in pleaſant Vein*
*Stood ſcoffing*, &c.

I think, indeed, that if M. *V.* did not like the Intention of *Milton*; he ſhould at leaſt have been more cautious than to load it thus with the Epithets of *Prepoſterous* and *Aukward*.

Page 43. *I dare affirm, that the Contrivance of the* Pandæmonium *wou'd have been entirely diſapproved of by Criticks like* Boyleau, Racine, *&c.*

The Reader ought to obſerve how M. *V.* has changed his Manners, now that an *Engliſh* Author is under his Knife. It is not he that diſapproves; it is *Boyleau, Racine*, and the *French* Criticks: is it out of Modeſty or Politick? *The Seat built for*

*the*

*the Parliament of the Devils ſeems very prepoſterous, ſince Satan hath ſummoned them altogether, and harangued them juſt before in an ample Field.* The *Council was neceſſary, but where it was to be held, it was very indifferent.* This Logick is admirable! Now Poetry ought not to invent any fine Thing, but only deſcribe what is neceſſary. *Satan* harangued his Devils in the Field: Muſt he of Conſequence held his Council in the Field? The Marvellous muſt then be ſtruck out of the Epick Poetry. M. *V.* would have been, perhaps, more pleaſed with *Milton*, if, inſtead of a *Pandæmonium*, he had in two Words diſpatch'd that Building, as he did the *Vieux Palais* of Love. Liberal Arts are of great Uſe and Ornament to Epick Poetry; which deſcribing their Performances, according to their Rules, it both pleaſes and inſtructs the Reader. When Powers, more than humane, are repreſented building, they ought alſo to build in a Manner greater than humane. Hence ſprings the Marvellous, ſo neceſſary in Poetry: That very *Pandæmonium* ſo built, is ſo far from being a *prepoſterous Invention*, that it is a wonderful ſublime one: How many juſt Ideas and Notions of the *Metallick* Nature, of the *Metallick* Art, and of Architecture are ſublimely diſplayed in its

Deſcription! Things, all the moſt becoming to Epick Poetry, and the moſt deſerving of its Deſcriptions. M. *V.* diſlikes in the *Pandæmonium* the *Dorick Order*, the *Freeze* and the *Cornice*, and the *Roof* of Gold; not becauſe he would not have had any Building at all; for he gives a Palace to Love, but becauſe he would not have had a Building of the *Dorick Order*, and with *Freeze* and *Cornice*; in ſhort, he would have had one with no Rules of Architecture; and as a good Oeconomiſt, he would have had the Roof but gilt over, and not of Maſſy Gold: And upon this he honours *Milton* by putting him together with *Father le Moine*, a *French* Scrub.

Page 114. *The Devil's* ſhrinking *into Pigmies, heighten the Ridicule of the whole Contrivance*, ſays he, and calls it a *ludicrous Way of Writing*. Let us ſee now what effect theſe very Things which M. *V.* diſparages, had in the Mind of Mr. *Addiſon*. SPECT. Nº 303.

*The Character of* Mammon, *and the Deſcription of the* Pandæmonium, *are full of Beauties,*

*The ſudden Production of the* Pandæmonium,

*The artificial Illuminations made in it* are three of the many *bright Parts of that Lumi-*

*Luminous Body*, and *ſuch Beauties as appear'd* to him *more exquiſite than the reſt.*

Let us ſee now how that ſhrinking of the Spirits affected Mr. *Addiſon.* He ſpeaking in the above *Spectator*, of ſurprizing Accidents, ſays, *There follows one at the very End of the firſt Book, which is what the* French *call* Marvellous. *The Multitude and Rabble of Spirits immediately ſhrunk themſelves, that there might be Room for ſuch a numberleſs Aſſembly in his capacious Hall. But it is the Poet's Refinement upon this Thought, which I muſt admire, and which is indeed very noble in itſelf; for he tells us, that notwithſtanding the Vulgar among the fallen Spirits, contracted their Forms, thoſe of the firſt Rank and Dignity ſtill preſerved their natural Dimenſions.* What contrary effects from the ſame Paſſages in M. *V.* and in Mr. *Addiſon!* What ſeems *prepoſterous* and *ridiculous* to one, ſeemed *ſublime and marvellous to the other*, and this according to the Rules of what *the* French *call* Marvellous!

M. *V.* in Page 114. blames *Milton* about this, ſaying, *As it was impracticable to build a Room large enough to contain them in their natural Size.* Hence one may ſee at what different Light from that of Mr. *Addiſon*, he has ſeen this Paſſage. It ſeems that in his Opinion

*Marvellous* and *Extravagant* are the ſame thing; for he would have had a *Pandæmonium* as large as Hell. The *Marvellous* muſt ſoar above the uſual Courſe of Nature, but not ſo high as to become imperceptible, and ſo loſing its fineſt Parts, the Degrees of Likelihood. That ſhrinking of the Rabble of Spirits, how much indeed contributes to the Grandeur of

*The great Seraphick Lords and Cherubim!*

I don't find any *Mock-Heroick* in the Reduction of thoſe Spirits into thoſe ſmall Forms, which M. *V.* calls *Metamorphoſis*, that is an intire change of Figure; for Spirits had by *Milton* been already deſcrib'd of a transforming Nature, by Contraction or Enlargement of their Dimenſions, and with great Judgment, as Mr. *Addiſon* ſays, *to make Way for ſeveral ſurpriſing Accidents in the Sequel of the Poem.*

Page 114. *The Fiction of Death and Sin ſeems to have in it ſome great Beauties, and many groſs Defects.*

Page 115. *The Sin ſpringing out of the Head of* Satan, *ſeems a beautiful Allegory of Pride; but I queſtion if Satan, getting his Daughter with Child, is an Invention to be approved of.* The only Favour our Author beſtows upon *Milton*, to diſtinguiſh him

him from *Taſſo*, is by the Verb to *ſeem*; for he thinks by that to moderate his bold Aſſertions. In the reſt, it is eaſily perceived, that by little and little he attempts to prove at laſt, that *Paradiſe Loſt* is a poor Poem, as he would have fain make appear the *Geruſalemme Liberata*, nay a great deal worſe. Vain attempt! I call *Milton's Paradiſe Loſt* the eldeſt Son of humane Imagination. All great Epick Poets have been help'd by the Senſes, almoſt in every Part of their Poems; but *Milton* had almoſt no other Help but that of his own Fancy. The Whole is almoſt all Imaginary, and as he well ſays, *Inviſible to mortal Sight*. Now of all this imaginary great Performance, the moſt ſublime, the moſt wonderful Part is the whole Chain of thoſe imaginary Beings, which M. *V*. calls *Shadowy* and *Intollerable when they are not allegorical*. I own I was as weary of thoſe pedantick Paragraphs, *the Fiction*, and *then Sin*, as I was, and am, and ſhall be for ever pleaſed with the ſecond Book of *Milton*; in which M. *V*. finds ſo many *groſs Defects*. How cou'd ever any Body oppoſe to ſuch vaſt poetical Imaginations the poor Doctrine of Father *Juvency* about Metaphors and Allegories! What can one anſwer to ſuch a ſilly Criticiſm?

ticiſm? What can one ſay againſt a fanciful Man, that at bright Noon, will *modeſtly* ſay to your Face, *The Sun is dark!* For my Part, I have no Notion of any greater Poetical Flame and Performance, than that very Fiction of *Death* and *Sin*; that Journey of Satan, and that Deſcription of *Chaos*. Want of humane Expreſſion to praiſe them, is the only Panegyrick *Milton* deſerves.

Page 115. *I am afraid that Fiction is but meer Quibble; for if Sin was of a Maſculine Gender in* Engliſh, *as it is in all the other Languages, that whole Affair drops, and the Fiction vaniſhes away.* I have call'd *Sin*, *Colpa*, and made it Feminine; *Morte*, *Spettro*, *Moſtro*, and made it Maſculine. My Tranſlation will ſhew to M. *V.* that his grammatical quibliſh Difficulty might never have ſtopped the overflowing Torrent of Poetick Fancy. It is a common ſaying in *Italy*, *Il Peccato genera la Morte*; and a common ſaying is often the Ground of ſublime poetical Productions.

Page 116. *Let ſuch Picture be ever ſo beautiful, ſtill it will be intolerable on the Account of its Foulneſs; that Complication of Horrors, that Mixture of Inceſt*, &c. How overnice and delicate grows here our Author! he that has writ a *good* Tragedy

of

of *Oedypus*, whoſe whole Texture is but a *Complication of Horrors* and a *Mixture of Inceſt!* he that in the Tenth Canto of his *Henriade*, has at the utmoſt full Length deſcribed with all imaginable Horrour, a Mother murdering her Child, in order to feed upon him.

That very ſtriking Horrour and Loathſomeneſs which enters into the Deſcription of a Vice, is the Perfection of it; for ſuch ſhould have been and was the Intention of the Writer. But why ſhall not M. *V.* run down in *Milton* ſome fine Paſſages on that very Account, for which he ſhou'd have prais'd them? Has he not done the ſame with *Homer* and *Taſſo*? Should not then his Logick go quite thro' his whole Eſſay?

Page 117. *I know the Bridge built by Death and Sin would be diſliked in* France. In ſhort, you'll ſee, that the whole Poem wou'd be diſlik'd in *France*; that is, M. *V.* does not like it in the Main. But why ſhou'd it not be liked in *France*? oh, becauſe *Men's Souls want no paved Way to be thrown into Hell*; he ſays, nay to be thrown there *after their Separation from the Body*; for ſhou'd they be thrown into Hell with their Body, they ſhould then want a paved Way. What a clear diſcurſive new Way of Criticiſm! An

*Italian*

*Italian* wou'd ſay, *Che Freddura!* It makes me remember a Sermon I heard in a Chapel in *Bedfordſhire*; it was preached on the Guardian Angel's Day. The good honeſt old Miniſter, with a devout grave Face ſaid, that as ſoon as the Souls were ſeparated from their Bodies, the Guardian Angels led them through the Heavens into the Preſence of God; or, how cou'd the poor Souls elſe find their Way through ſo many Spheres and Planets?

It is plain, that M. *V.* conſiders here an Epick Poem as a Piece of Natural Hiſtory, or as a Traveller's Journal. Without ſuch Machinery as that Bridge founded upon Truth; Poetry wou'd be but a flat Contrivance. The Paſſage to Hell was open'd by *Sin* and *Death*; why then a Poet may not invent a Bridge? which is certainly in its Nature the moſt noble Paſſage from one Place to an other, and fills the Eyes of the Reader with a wonderous great Structure. Human Life was never better repreſented than by a Bridge in the Spectator No. 159.

Page 117. *They would laugh at the Paradiſe of Fools* &c. becauſe, according to M. *V*'s new Art of Poetry, Satyr ought not to have place in an Epick Poem. If there is any in the *Henriade*, let the Pope, Cardinals, Prieſts and Monks, judge,

judge, and particularly in the fourth Canto. Thoſe ſatyrical Touches he calls *comical Imaginations*; for Satyr, in his Opinion, muſt be writ in a tragical Stile.

Page 117, 18, 19. All thoſe Pages have been imploy'd by M. *V.* in letting us know why the *French* Criticks wou'd diſapprove *the War in Heaven* (notwithſtanding that the Earl of *Roſcommon* and Mr. *Addiſon* admired chiefly that very Part of the Poem) Firſt, becauſe *a War in Heaven, being an imaginary Thing, which lies out of the Reach of our Nature, ſhou'd be contracted in two or three Pages*; by which new axiom the whole Poem ſhou'd alſo have been contracted in thirty Pages; for it is almoſt quite Imaginary; and the reaſon of that Contraction is, becauſe *we are impatient to remove from us* what is *not adapted to our Senſes*. Then according to this reaſon; if *Milton* has adapted to our Senſes by the Force of his Poetry, what in it ſelf is above them; M. *V*'s *Impatiency* ſhou'd ceaſe. To imploy the Readers Eyes as well as Mind, by giving body and life to things which have them not, is the Enchantment of Poetry. Why did not M. *V.* contract to three Pages the Journies of *Diſcord*, the Court of *Love*, and the Exploits of both? Are they not Objects more imaginary than Angels?

Second-

Secondly, *Becauſe 'tis an idle Task to give the Reader the full Character of the Leaders of that War.* But why an idle Taſk? only becauſe M. *V.* will have it ſo; that is all. According to the Chriſtian Scheme, Angels are the next Beings above Man; why then may not Poetry imagine Characters in Creatures immediately above us? Who ever found Fault with Painters that painted *Michael* in an Armour, or another Angel with a pair of Scales in his Hand, thus giving to one the Character of a Warriour, and to the other that of a Judge? In the very Characters of the Evil Spirits conſiſts all the Hiſtory of Idols, which was a very great Taſk for *Milton*, and a very uſeful thing for the Reader; ſince it ſo agreeably inſtructs him, by an exact Hiſtorical and Chronological Account of Idolatry, and leads him to the very Spring of the Pagan Mythology: Wherefore it is evident that ſuch an *Idle Task* proves an incomparble uſeful one, as it is the cleareſt and the moſt inſtructive that ever was ſeen of that very intricate Part of Erudition. I am ſurpriſed that M. *V.* ſhou'd call thoſe *Beings utter Strangers to the Reader.* One wou'd think that *Milton*'s Readers know nothing of the Fall of Angels, of *Satan*, of *Michael*, &c. Nay, one wou'd ſuppoſe him an *Indian*, never acquainted

acquainted with the Notions of our Religion, and that he had never read the Apocalypſe, whence *Milton* has drawn ſo much of his Machinery.

Thirdly, *He makes the* French *Criticks redicule the Angels for plucking up Mountains, and flinging them on the Heads of their Enemies.* What in Poetry has never been judged improper for Giants, why ſhou'd it now by a Poet be thought improper for Angels, who ought ſurely to be eſteemed ſtronger than Giants?

He puts ſome of his groteſque Similies upon *Milton* as well as on *Taſſo*. *Angels*, ſays he, *arm'd with Mountains in Heaven, reſemble too much the Dipſodes in* Rabelais, *who wore an Armour of Portland Stone ſix Foot thick.* To this notable Simile as heavy and thick as *Dipſodes*'s Armour it ſelf, follows immediately another of the ſame ſtamp. About the Falling of Angels before Satan's Artillery, he ſays, *Indeed (if the Expreſſion may be forgiven) 'tis to play at Nine Pins.* Theſe two grave Critical Similes, if they cannot be forgiven, are at leaſt to be pitied. But I muſt refer my Reader to the Spectator 333, where this *War in Heaven* is placed in its proper Light, and ſet out in all its Sublimity.

Page 119. *I cannot omit here the viſible Contradiction which reigns in that Epiſode. God ſends his faithful Angels to Fight, to conquer and to puniſh the Rebels*, &c. *How does it come to paſs after ſuch a poſitive Order, that the Battle hangs doubtful? And why did God the Father command* Gabriel *and* Raphael *to do what he executes afterwards by his Son only?*

This *Viſible* or rather Viſionary *Contradiction* was by M. *V.* left for the laſt Piece of Triumph againſt *Milton*, in order to crown his glorious Criticiſm. Whoever is acquainted with both Authors, may eaſily find out whom this Diſpute will end favourable for. That *Milton* ſhou'd be capable of a groſs Error, nay that *Milton* without a great Deſign ſhou'd have advanced what M. *V.* calls a *viſible Contradiction*, it is a very hard Taſk to prove. That our Author may have been too haſty, and therefore did not diſcover the Beauty and the Conſequences of that Paſſage, is not a Taſk ſo very hard to demonſtrate.

Let us examine the firſt Orders of God,

*Go* Michael, *&c.*
Gabriel, *lead forth to battle theſe my Sons,*
*Invincible, lead forth my armed Saints*, &c.
*——Them with Fire and hoſtile Arms*
*Fearleſs Aſſault, and to the Brow of Heav'n*
*Pur-*

*Purſuing drive them out from God and Bliſs*
*Into their Place of Puniſhment*, &c.

What is in all this, but Orders to lead forth an Army to battle, to aſſault, to purſue, to drive the Enemy into the Place of Puniſhment? It is by no means *ſending* Gabriel *and* Michael *to conquer*? it is not a Doom of Conqueſt. Where is the Contradiction? *Milton*'s Deſign was to exalt his Hero *Meſſiah*; wherefore he contrived, that Orders ſhou'd be given to the Angels to lead forth the Army, to aſſault, to purſue, to drive the Enemy into the Place of Puniſhment, in order to convince them, that they cou'd only execute that Part of thoſe Orders which was in their Power, and that the total Victory was alone in the Power of their King *Meſſiah*. This was the noble Deſign of *Milton*, from whence he made ariſe in that fierce Battle.

*——horrid Confuſion heap'd*
*Upon Confuſion——*
*When the Almighty Father.*

Book VI. Verſe 675.

*That his great Purpoſe he might ſo fulfil,*
*To honour his anointed Son, aveng'd*
*Upon his Enemies, and to declare*
*All Power on him transferred,*
*——he thus began*, &c.

M. *V.* asks why *the Battle hangs doubtful after ſuch a poſitive Order?* becauſe the poſitive Order was given, in order to make the Battle hang doubtful: He could have found out this plain Reaſon in *Milton* as well as I, in the following Verſes.

Verſe 687.

*———Sore hath been their Fight*, &c.
*For to themſelves I left them, and thou knoweſt*
*Equal in their Creation they were form'd*
*Save what Sin hath impair'd———*

The viſible Contradiction to an Order, is but a counter Order. Endeavouring to execute an Order, and not ſucceeding; when was it ever a Contradiction to that Order? *Milton* would have been guilty of a Contradiction, had he at the Beginning of the ſixth Book, made the *Jovereign Voice* pronounce *the Doom*, inſtead of giving *the Orders*. But M. *V.* cou'd have ſeen that the Doom was ſuſpended yet.

*———Which yet hath wrought*
*Inſenſibly, for I ſuſpend their Doom;*
*Whence in perpetual Fight they needs muſt laſt*
*Endleſs*, &c.

The Orders were given, the *Doom* was ſuſpended; where is the Contradiction then? In the next Verſes one may both

ſee

ſee and admire, the *Doom* pronounced, the Cauſe of that Suſpenſion declared, and the full Power of *Meſſiah* ſhining forth.

Verſe 699.

*Two Days are therefore paſt, the Third is thine*
*For thee I have ordain'd it, and thus far*
*Have ſuffer'd, that the Glory may be thine*
*Of ending this great War, ſince none but thou*
*Can end it. Into thee ſuch Virtue and Grace*
*Immenſe I have transfus'd.*

I deſire M. *V.* to be attentive to the next Expreſſion, where he will ſee more clearly *Milton*'s noble Deſign in all this

*——————that they may know*
*In Heav'n and Hell thy Power above compare.*

Which was to ſay, that both the good and bad Angels might know Meſſiah's Power above compare. I hope M. *V.* will find now that he may be eaſily contradicted by thoſe who examine thoroughly what they are about, before they decide. I muſt own, that he has been more indulgent to *Taſſo* than to *Milton*; for if one ſhou'd ſtrike out of *Taſſo* a *hundred Lines* and the Epiſode of *Olindo*, ſtill his *Geruſalemme Liberata*, ſo *Voltairely* corrected, would remain almoſt as great a Poem. But ſhou'd one correct *Milton*'s *Paradiſe Loſt*, according to his Criticiſm, what wou'd

wou'd remain of it? One ſhou'd ſtrike out, 1ſt, The Digreſſions upon himſelf, call'd, *Excurſions.* 2d, The *Beginnings of ſome Books* call'd, *Kinds of Prologues.* 3. All the heathen Deities brought in his Poem howſoever. 4. The offenſive and jeſting Speeches of Satan before the ſecond Battle. 5. The *Pandæmonium.* 6. The holding of a Council in it. 7. It's Architecture. 8. The contracting of their Forms by the Vulgar, among the fallen Spirits. 9. The Fiction of Death, *Sin* and *Chaos.* 10. *Satan*'s Adventures with them. 11. The Battles of the Angels, *&c.* Oh! what a Skeleton wou'd he make of ſo great and ſo divine a Poem! Nay farther, he wou'd deprive it even of its principal Hero. For, at Page 120, he ſays, that *Adam* is *Milton*'s *Hero and firſt Perſonage.* *Dryden* ſaid, in jeſt, that the *Devil* was the Hero of the Poem. But M. *V. tout de bon* ſays, that *Adam* is the *Hero and firſt Perſonage* of it. *Meſſiah* is but an Epiſodical Perſon then; and Mr. *Addiſon* was in the wrong to ſay in the Spectator 297. *If one will needs fix the Name of an Hero upon any Perſon in it, 'tis certainly the* Meſſiah *who is the Hero, both in the principal Action and in the chief Epiſodes.* By which his two Obſervations at Page 120, become of no conſequence at all.

I muſt conclude with this Obſervation which a Friend of mine made. When M. *V.* found Fault with *Taſſo*, he excuſed him by ſaying ; *but I look on theſe Errors as a kind of Tribute, which his Genius condeſcended to pay to the* Italian *Taſte* : beſides the whole *Italian* Nation is moſt injuriouſly uſed by this great Author. But when he comes to *Milton*, and finds ſo many Faults in his *Paradiſe Loſt* ; not one ſingle Word of the *Engliſh* National Taſte. The only Expreſſion advanced againſt the *Engliſh* Poets, is *their Fondneſs of Allegories and Similies* — Page 42. Nay *their Flights bordering on* Bombaſt, *prove* only that in this Country *Authors have more free Scope than in* France. Page 44. What a Moderation ! No national ill Taſte argued from *Engliſh* bad Poets, nor from ſome indifferent Paſſages of their beſt Authors ! ah ! ſuch a Moderation wou'd Mr. *Voltaire* have made uſe of in *Italy*, and railed there at the *Engliſh* national Taſte ; had he been about a *Subſcription* in *Italy*, as he has been in *England*.

*F I N I S.*

MVSEVM
BRITAN
NICVM